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THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

*'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . .'* James Connolly



1000<sup>th.</sup>

ISSUE



# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## ST. JOHN'S CREDIT UNION

136, Sycamore Ave.,  
Rathbane,  
Limerick.  
28th, March, 1980.

As one who continuously fights for the rights of the ordinary working person, I wonder would you consider printing the enclosed letter in your next edition of the 'Limerick Socialist'.

Since the credit union movement began in this country in the early sixties, considerable good has been derived from it by its members. Small interest loans have been provided for such things as cars, holidays, house improvements etc., whilst also providing a confidential banking system. I believe one of its main objectives was to help improve the living standards of the ordinary working man and woman by the methods described above. Thousands of people throughout the country are thankful for benefits obtained and, therefore, it is with great reluctance that I write this letter of criticism of one branch in our city, namely St. John's.

On May 25th. last, my sister, Mrs. O'Donovan of 26, Kilmurry Avenue, Garryowen, informed the credit union that she had decided to close her account. She was advised that a cheque would be ready for collection on May 30th. On this date, she went to the office to receive her cheque and was then advised that there was a problem with her account. Apparently, a lodgement of £135 which was made on 6/10/78 and correctly recorded in every detail in her pass book, was not accounted for in the credit union's internal books. Missing also was the counter-ticket for this particular transaction. At this point she was offered a cheque to cover the amount in her account less the £135. This she refused. I was advised of the problem on that same evening and assumed that there was a simple explanation. After all, the money was clearly shown in the pass book as having been lodged, with the cashier's initials clearly shown. It is also worth noting that printed on the pass book is the following:

"No other receipt for payment on shares, loan repayments or interest will be given".

Obviously then, the pass book was the receipt and all my sister requested was that the money covered by the receipt should be returned to her with the interest added. I agreed to visit the credit union to clear up this simple matter.

I went to the credit union office on June 8th. and met Mr. Madden, who I believe is a full time official. We discussed the problem and he stated that he could not explain what happened. He also went to great pains in expressing the honesty of the cashier whose initials are shown in the pass book. (This was never questioned by either my sister or myself). He also stated that the matter was being given over to their solicitor. Whether this piece of information was given to inform or frighten me I'm still not sure. We agreed that we would meet again within a month and hopefully resolve the problem.

The next meeting was on July 6th. and other than going over the same ground nothing further was accomplished. One thing Mr. Madden did advise me of at this point, was that their solicitor would interview the cashier whose initials were shown on the pass book. We agreed to meet again within two weeks.

July 20th. was the date our next meeting and Mr. Mad-

den advised me that the solicitor had interviewed the cashier but no comment was made. He promised that he would ensure that an answer from the solicitor would be given, either good or bad, in the first week of August.

Friday, August 3rd. was my last visit, when I was met by Mr. Madden in the waiting room, and he made the following statement: 'My board of directors have instructed me to discuss the problem no further with anyone'. I asked if their solicitor had made known his decision and Mr. Madden replied that he had nothing further to say.

After nine weeks, this was the answer given by a board which is supposed to have the interests of the members at heart.

Finally, we took the only course open to us and put the matter in the hands of our solicitor. Within seven days the cheque for the full amount was handed over to my sister. Over four months elapsed between the time the money was requested and finally paid. I wonder what would be the outcome if the same thing happened to a member who had not got the ability to fight their case.

When handing over the cheque Mr. Madden said how sorry he was that the problem was not solved sooner but that his hands were tied. It could well be said that it was unfortunate that it took a solicitor's letter to untie them.

After reading the letter, I trust you will agree with me that many important questions need answering, i.e.,

1. Why did not St. John's Credit Union pay up on a receipt that they accepted was issued by them?
2. Why did it take 4 months plus a solicitor's letter before the money was paid?
3. What would have happened if our solicitor was not called in?
4. What would have happened if this problem arose with a person who had not the ability to fight their case?
5. Where did the money go?
6. Do the management of St. John's Credit Union normally treat people in the same fashion as both my sister and I were treated on this occasion?

There are numerous other questions which could be asked, but I trust the letter enclosed covers these.

I can assure you that I am only requesting the publication of this letter as a way of advising the members of St. John's Credit Union about the type of people who manage their money. I should also state that the local paper, 'The Limerick Leader' refused to publish it as they said it appeared to them that it was a simple case of a cashier making a mistake, and they did not believe it would be of interest to the public. I don't agree, hence this letter to you.

If you require evidence of our solicitor's efforts, or credit union book etc., I have these in my possession and would show them to you. If there are any questions, please contact me at the above address.

I do not expect this letter will eliminate the possibility of future mistakes at St. John's or other credit unions but at least it may encourage other members in similar situations to stand up for their rights, including the right to insist on the pass book receipt as being a valid account. It is also to be hoped that St. John's Credit Union will have learned from the experience and will not repeat the conduct described in this letter.

Gerard A. Gleeson.



# FIANNA FAIL FLATTERY

Charlie Haughey didn't have very much to say about Northern Ireland at the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis. What he did have to say was predictable: Northern Ireland had proved itself a dead loss since separated from the South; there was the deplorable but inevitable violence; there was the high unemployment in some areas — "surely the fine people of Northern Ireland deserve better than this!" (That is to say, surely they deserve to be united with a state which the majority of them abhor and are prepared to fight rather than be absorbed in. Surely they deserve to be disconnected from the British finances and linked with a small scale economy which could not maintain their existing social services).

And Haughey wants us all to know that he isn't speaking as an outsider. Imagine it, he lived among some of these creatures that he wants to absorb politically! "I know their qualities. I admire their virtues. I understand their deeply-held convictions". In short, there's practically no length of flattery to which I won't go in talking about them, except to recognise their right to determine their own political destiny. What do they want such a right for? I wouldn't dominate or coerce them; in fact, I'd make it my business to see that nobody else did. I swear it, on my honour as a founder of the Provisional I.R.A.! All this nonsense was interrupted by cheering from the ranks on average once every one — and — a — half sentences.

Haughey's propaganda contributes to the peculiar

hypocrisy of Southern Ireland which keeps the I.R.A. alive even while security measures are taken to prevent it from living too freely. But this time he did not attempt to whip up nationalism as a diversion from social problems. The social problems of the Republic took up by far the greater part of his speech.

Bruce Arnold, political correspondent of the "Irish Independent", had suggested it would be a good idea for Haughey to beat the nationalist drum. Commenting on the popularity Jimmy Carter gained from foreign policy after his domestic policy had run aground, Arnold said: "It is already self-evident that he cannot offer any prescriptions for our domestic problems that will unite the Irish people behind him — there simply are not enough options. Expectation has been too high for too long — if one takes up the analogy with Jimmy Carter, this places rather a heavy burden on our foreign policy. And since Ireland's foreign policy consists of one serious issue only, Northern Ireland, this places quite a burden on this much-discussed issue". ("Irish Independent, 16/2/80).

But the spirit of social reform is too strong at this moment in Southern Ireland for Haughey to try the old diversionary tactic with safety. Labour won't wait! The more Southern workers insist on social reform in the south and refuse to be concerned with the great national aim of coercing Northern Ireland, the better for everyone in both areas.

## CIVIL RIGHTS ?

The abstentionist tactic of Northern Ireland nationalists since the late 1920s has been a major cause of isolation for the Catholic minority. The deliberate decision of the nationalists not to participate fully in the administration of the N.I. state, resulted in the introduction of "Gerrymandering". The much-publicised "Gerrymandering" of Derry, for instance, has its roots in abstentionism; representatives of the Catholic majority there initially refused to participate in city government, making a Protestant take-over inevitable if the city was to be governed at all.

The early days of NICRA placed the nationalists in a dilemma. Some of the founder members of NICRA, seeking equal rights within Northern Ireland, were under no illusion that this meant participation in the state. NICRA demands for a more democratic administration would reinforce the Northern Ireland state and weaken republicanism. A democratic Unionist state was not a Republican demand. However, the potential of such a movement was quickly recognised for its propaganda value and as a vehicle on which yet another anti-partition campaign could be launched. Soon with nationalist support, NICRA accelerated rapidly. Its propaganda was portraying anti-Catholic discrimination as a direct result of Unionist bigotry rather than the nationalist boycott.

The NICRA programme was one of democratic reform, and the widespread support it gained did show the desire of many Catholics to participate in the state. But NICRA never took a clear position on the national question. It could not, since from the beginning the many Republican participants saw the civil rights movement simply as a means of popularising once again the campaign against partition.

There were many supporters of the British link who supported and joined the civil rights movement in its early days; it is a measure of how little objection in principle there was to demands for democratic treatment of the minority that many people whose unionism was never in doubt — people such as MP. Mrs. Anne Dickson — joined the movement and left it only when it became obvious to all that it was an anti-partitionist front organisation.

When the I.R.A. campaign came in 1971, it was portrayed as a reaction to oppression and NICRA gradually faded from the scene, having served its purpose. Incidentally, as the original demands of NICRA, were gradually conceded, they were not treated as significant by those who were most active in the agitation. The true aim was clearly obvious when the I.R.A. proved its effectiveness as they launched their 1971 campaign and the SDLP were also heard clamouring for a united Ireland.

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Notes On DR. LONG WRITES HIS OWN HISTORY of the LIMERICK MEDICAL MISSION

# THE DR. LONG STORY

## PART NINE

### THE FIRST ATTACK BY "FATHER" TIERNEY

In the quietest possible manner the Mission commenced its double work of ministering to the sick and suffering, and of pointing them to Jesus the great and only Physician of the soul.

Very few in Limerick knew anything at all about this effort, but day by day the news of it and the character of it spread amongst the poor people who came for medical relief, and who showed no sign of resentment against our efforts to lead them to Christ. They came in increasing numbers, and it was a great joy to me to stand amongst them and tell them about Jesus, His life and death, His resurrection and ascension, and to encourage all to look to Him. Those who came appeared greatly interested. I received many expressions and tokens of their gratitude; they came again and brought their friends, and these again brought others. The work in a few months became widely known in the city and country. In speaking of the Blessed Virgin we encouraged all to give her the honour due to her as the mother of our Lord, to trust the same Saviour as she trusted, and to attend to her command, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it". (St. John ii, 5). Jesus as the Great Physician, the Good Shepherd, the Friend of Sinners, the Only Way, etc., was the favourite subject spoken of each morning.

Our waiting-room became inconveniently crowded with the number of patients attending — in May and June there were over 1,000 attendances registered each month. In August and September the numbers were almost as large. It was a great wonder to us how the Roman Catholic priests allowed these people to come under the influence of the Mission, knowing how utterly opposed the greater portion of their teaching is to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We were thankful to have this opportunity of reaching the people, while we daily expected an attack from the priests; and at length it came — suddenly bursting upon the Mission like a thunderstorm! One evening when cycling into town, passing a house in process of building, a warning note, in the shape of "Ha, Long", came from some man upon the roof, and a little further on a stone thrown rattled in the wheel of my bicycle.

The following morning, Saturday, September 24th, 1898, just as we had commenced work and the waiting-room was filling up with patients — some twenty being present — a Redemptorist monk, "Father" Tierney, made his way into the dispensary, and called upon all the Roman Catholics present to leave, saying: "This house is a souper's house — all Catholics must leave". Some were terrified at the appearance of this man and rushed out. Hearing the loud voice and the disturbance, I went out of my consulting-room, and ordered him to leave at once, which he did. I closed the door; then he commenced to knock and shout: "All Catholics come out". I opened the door again, and ordered him off; he stood addressing a crowd which had collected, shouting: "This house is a souper's house. The Doctor is a souper doctor. No Catholic is to go in there".

Wild stories circulated through the city to the effect that this "holy father" had been insulted by the doctor and kicked out of the dispensary, and soon I found myself an object of considerable interest, and had to be placed under police protection. The same evening a letter appeared in the *Munster News* from "Father" Cregan, who had secured a copy of the Sixth Annual Report of the Dublin Medical Mission, where reference was made to my having left to take up similar work in Limerick. Ar-

med with this report, he proceeded to warn the public against the Mission in a moderate and reasonable manner. He wrote: "As priest having charge of the district where he has established himself, I feel it my duty to state publicly that he is here for proselytising purposes. Dr. Long is simply using the noble profession to which he belongs as the agent of a Society that has for its object the perversion of Irish Catholics, and the sooner our poor are warned against this insidious attempt on their Faith the better".

The next day, Sunday, the Mission and I myself were denounced in all the Roman Catholic chapels in Limerick.

"Father" Tierney followed up his attack on the dispensary by preaching a violent sermon to the large Men's Confraternity on Monday evening, in the course of which the basest motives were attributed to all those who from time to time have endeavoured to proclaim the tidings of a free salvation to Roman Catholics. He said: "All their benevolence was begotten in Hell". Referring to those associated with the Mission, he said: "There are here in this city of Limerick men and, God save the mark! women, too, who if they could set up outside this church their gallows and triangle, would drag us from our convent homes, scourge, burn, and hang us without mercy". Referring to myself, he remarked: "He is known now to be the hireling agent of the Irish Church Missions — the undying enemy of the Catholic Church. He is known to be the mouthpiece of those bigoted hounds who are going about Limerick snarling and barking, since they cannot bite. Yes, Doctor dear, the sooner you get a definite and unexpected call to some other Mission the better; for your true character is exposed; Proselytiser, souper, that is your name, and that is your calling".

In closing, he called upon his hearers, saying: "Men of the Confraternity, stand up on your feet, raise up your hands, and say after me, 'I protest in the sight of God, against the attack which has been made by the bigots of Limerick upon our religion; I promise never to attend myself, and to prevent whom I can from attending'." The congregation having responded as "Father" Tierney required, the service concluded with what is called the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Nationalist papers now joined in the denunciation of the Mission. "Father" Tierney's sermon appeared in full, also an account of his visit to the dispensary; and in leading articles they advised the "Catholic poor of the city to shun Dr. Long as they would some contagious disease, and to avoid his moral medicine as they would poison". The *Limerick Leader*, somewhat more tolerant, deprecated persecution, and printed a very fair report of an interview with a reporter for that paper, in which I explained our real object, and pointed out that all we taught in the Mission was found in the Roman Catholic Testament, that we all professed the Catholic Faith as taught by our Blessed Lord and His Apostles.

The Mission was now well watched. On the next day a priest rode up and down in front of the dispensary, with a dog-whip in his hand, for the evident purpose of intimidating anyone who should dare attempt to enter the "proselytising swamp", as the house was described by the *Munster News*. Bishop O'Dwyer made it "a reserved sin" for any Romanist to attend, which meant that it was a mortal sin of so dreadful a character that no priest in Limerick could pardon it, and all who committed this sin were obliged to go to the Bishop himself for absolution.

The attack of "Father" Tierney on the Medical Mission created a great sensation in the city, indignation was



aroused, and the mob became excited, believing that the "holy father" had been grossly insulted, that the Blessed Virgin had been evilly spoken of, and that attempts had been made to induce people to, change their religion by bribery.

I found myself immediately an object of the utmost contempt, a notorious character guarded by police wherever I went, shouted after by irresponsible boys and girls in every part of the city; and if I ventured into the side streets, stones and dirt of all kinds were thrown at me and at my guard.

A large demonstration was held in Thomas Street on the Friday evening following the attack. Thousands crowded this and the adjoining streets during the hour set apart for men to attend the dispensary. We were obliged to close the door. Many police were present, and the people amused themselves by shouting to the tune of a well-known song, "We'll hang Dr. Long on a sour apple tree". A few stones were thrown and one pane of glass was broken in the house.

Some patients who dared to come received rough treatment. A young woman, recently returned from America to nurse her sick mother, asked me to call to see her. She said she did not fear trouble from her neighbours; so I called, and found her mother dying. That evening their little cottage was attacked by a mob from the neighbourhood, the door was battered with sticks and stones, the window was smashed in by stones flung through it. They were in a sad plight, and it was with difficulty that this young woman protected her dying mother from being struck with stones.

It was felt necessary to reply to some of the charges made by "Father" Tierney, and as no Limerick newspaper would publish such a reply, two thousand copies of a leaflet refuting the charges and explaining the nature and object of the Mission were circulated by post amongst the principal residents. In this leaflet the Scriptural basis of Medical Mission work was clearly stated — "Heal the sick" and "Preach the Gospel". The issue of the leaflet again aroused "Father" Tierney, who preached a tirade to the Confraternity with it as his text. He commenced by showing that he was holding back an indignant people insulted by this tract, and but for him "the Doctor would have had to exercise his surgical skill on the setting of some of his own precious bones". He then proceeded to draw upon his imagination for an account of the "great consternation in the camp of those persons who had brought Dr. Long to Limerick — the 'old women' of both sexes, the enthusiastic young and old maids", all "struck dumb with sorrow when they found their pious fraud exposed"; not too dumb, however, to hold "a preliminary meeting", at which "all that was heard was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. After some time, after much heart-searching and heart-burning and inward groaning of spirit, all these pious old maids and the rest of them determined to prepare some red-hot Gospel shots with which to pour a volley into the camp of the poor, benighted, obstinate Papists". Some will probably be amused, others disgusted, as they read this setting forth of "the truth of the matter" by this "holy father", who was the spiritual director of the Arch-Confraternity. In closing, he again appealed to them to "set a watch upon that house, see who goes in and who comes out, and come to me with the names. I beg of you to help me to stamp out this vile proselytism".

For some weeks a close watch was kept on the dispensary, and frequently as many as forty Confraternity men were marched up and down in front during dispensary hours. Yet, notwithstanding this guard, every day there were some who boldly came in from the city and country. This greatly grieved "Father" Tierney, so that again he referred to the Mission and said: "Some of the men of the Confraternity have taken to heart what I have already said, and a watch is kept. Anyone who goes into that house deserves no kind of patience at all, and they must be made to feel it. Let them be followed to where they



Mr. Hare, Dr. Long's assistant.

live; then, when you know their names, tell their neighbours around. I beg of you to take this work to heart, and do it properly. I said that three members of the Confraternity went there. That was not so. I could not find the names of two of them on the books, but the other was a member of the Confraternity. He is not now, and will not be while I am here".

Such was the system of intimidation and spying advocated by "Father" Tierney to rob the people of Limerick of their liberty to choose for themselves their own doctor. It is to the credit of the Confraternity that very few of its members were willing to do this dirty work for him, but there were a few. One member went home and kicked and beat his wife, so that she had to take refuge from him in a stable, because she had been to the dispensary. An old man was followed as he went home and was beaten, and his bottle of medicine smashed. I was attending a boy with a large abscess on his chest when the priest came in and so terrified his mother that she had to ask me not to call again. Another priest beat a poor woman black and blue with the handle of his umbrella, because I had visited her sick children. Many similar instances occurred, but the people as a whole did not support the priests. The watch on the dispensary soon slackened, and in the closing months of the year many who were frightened at first came back again. In spite of all the opposition, denunciation, and persecution, there was again a steady increase in the numbers attending, and many heard the Word of Life.

In January, 1899, "Father" Tierney related to the Confraternity that he had called to see a servant girl who had been visiting the dispensary, and that she had lost her faith. He said: "I asked her if what I had heard was true, and she said, 'that now she knew her Saviour, and she had her Bible, and was very happy'. This was the result of such a man coming to town". This girl was obliged to give up her place and leave the city, as the direct result of the "holy father's" visit.

—————"Medical Missions in Ireland"—————  
The Story of Limerick, by Joseph John Long.



# THE KNIGHTS

BY JOHN CASEY

"The Knights of St. Columbanus", written by Evelyn Bolster (Gill and Macmillan, 1979) is the first book on what many regard as an important and influential organization in Ireland. Miss Bolster is a nun and this was a help to her in getting information: she praises Sean P. Bedford, Supreme Knight from 1975 to 1978, and former collector-general of taxes, as being particularly helpful. She began her project seemingly in a spirit of admiration for the society but became steadily more disillusioned as she was presented with obstacles, closed doors and veils of secrecy. She put a lot of research into the book and, given all the circumstances, it is reasonably objective. Yet the book fails. It does so because she neither exposes nor offers an assessment of the real power of the organisation.

The society had its beginnings in the Catholic Association, founded in 1902. The aims of the Association were to forward the temporal aims of Irish Catholics and to put a stop to job discrimination by the Protestants. The Association had a short life: it had the opposition of wealthy Protestants, who saw in it a threat to their elitist position. Liberal clergymen such as Canon Sheehan of Doneraile and Dr. Walter McDonald declined invitations to become involved, and after some time the hierarchy decided that it could prove more of an embarrassment than a help and withdraw support. The Association was succeeded by the Catholic Defence Society, which lasted from 1905 to 1914; this body showed itself more given to talk than to action and was moribund long before its existence was officially terminated.

The founding of the Knights is credited to Fr. James O'Neill of Ballycastle, Co. Antrim. O'Neill was involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and was keen that the social teachings of the papal encyclicals should be more widely disseminated, especially amongst the workers. He decided to investigate the American Knights of Columbanus and got a copy of their constitution and relevant information from some prominent American Catholics. Using these documents as a basis, he drafted a skeleton scheme for a Catholic Action group and submitted it to his bishop. There were setbacks to be overcome and a lack of enthusiasm amongst the hierarchy, but Fr. O'Neill continued undeterred. He and his supporters drew up a constitution, a list of rituals, a draft charter and rules and regulations for the guidance of the embryonic Knights of Columbanus.

Throughout its existence the bishops have been guided in their attitudes by two primary factors: firstly, that they should have overall control and secondly, that the organization should be useful without proving an embarrassment. At different times members of the hierarchy have both opposed and supported the society. Today it enjoys the friendship of some of the most prominent bishops: Bishop Casey of Galway, Dr. Cathal Daly and Cardinal O'Fiaich. If they were once in the cold the Knights now enjoy the glow of episcopal approval.

The headquarters of the society is Ely House in Ely Place, Dublin, a great block of a house, sections of which have been rented to, amongst others, the Department of Health. The Knights are ruled by a board comprising the Supreme Knight, the Supreme Officers (there are eight of these all carrying out different functions), the life members of the Board, the Provincial Grand Knight and his deputy from each of the eleven provincial areas and finally, the three trustees. Members of the hierarchy can be appointed as honorary life members and the board has

its own standing committee called the Supreme Executive Committee.

Of the eleven provincial councils three are divided into different numbers of primary councils. The Supreme Council meets annually, the Provincial Council quarterly and the Primary Council monthly. The Primary Council is the basic unit and is known as a C.K. (Council of Knights). Evelyn Bolster gives the total membership as 4,000; this seems extremely low and doesn't tally with the society's claim to have been the principal organizers of the Eucharistic Congress, the organizing of which required more than 4,000 people. Then there was the papal visit. Was it also the Knights who organized this? Ostensibly it was all done by the hierarchy but they had to have the support of the religious organizations. No one officially claimed the credit, but then the Knights are publicity shy.

There appears to be a sub-group within the Knights whose function it is to enlist the cooperation of other Catholic groups. There is the controversial Industrial, Commercial and Professional Committee, which is known to have members in the higher management and directorships. It is said that membership is just a cynical means of self-advancement. It is well known that promotion in the civil service at certain levels is dependant on membership and it is widely held that successive director-generals of R.T.E., as well as other members of senior management there, have all been Knights. The Church's desire to control the media is well known, and when R.T.E. television began to broadcast in 1962 the Knights set up a special monitoring committee.

Within a historical perspective some of their campaigns make them seem foolish: the indecent literature campaign in Cork which drew attention to the absence in Cork bookshops of a substantial number of recognized classics, blanket condemnation of cinema, radio, dancing and drinking — all the Jansenistic puritanism that was firmly rooted until the early 'sixties. However, it must be remembered that in all these campaigns they had a majority consensus at the time. And, while there were mad schemes like renaming the days of the week, and rebuilding Clonmacnoise, there were also solid ventures like the founding of Muintir na Tire (Fr. Hayes, was a Knight) and the outline of a teaching and training course for apprentices before the establishment of ANCo.

When one looks at the politicians who were members one is less inclined to dismiss the organisation as an inconsequential religious fringe: Sean Lemass, Sean T. O Ceallaigh, Sean MacEntee, Frank McDermott, Joe Blowick, William Norton, Brendan Corish, Sean MacEoin, Gerry Boland, and Cahir Healy. All of these are known to have been Knights and it is reasonable to assume that there are others that are not known. De Valera was ambivalent about them: in his early years he was hostile and attacked them in a speech in 1943. In his later years he had a change of heart and in 1973 assured Patrick Hogan, the Supreme Knight of the time, that "he thanked God for such an organization". Oliver Flanagan T.D. is probably their best known political spokesman but must have done them more harm than he can ever imagine.

It is interesting to note that the chair of sociology in Maynooth was endowed by the Knights to the tune of £8,000 — which was a large amount of money in 1937 — when the chair became a reality. This was a response to Catholic social action, which was widely promoted in the



# A Socialist Milestone

# A 100th. EDITION

This month the Limerick Socialist is one hundred issues old. Since January 1972, when the first edition appeared, not a month has passed without the paper appearing. The survival and success of the publication represents a decisive step forward for socialism in Limerick.

For the first time in the city a working class paper, back by a group of politically conscious workers, has consistently put forward the socialist case. For the first time in Limerick the narrow nationalist interpretation of Irish history has been successfully challenged and a socialist alternative put in its place. The paper has played a major part in relegating nationalist groups to the periphery of working class politics in the city.

Above all, the Limerick Socialist has made the greatest contribution to the raising of the political consciousness of Limerick workers. This increased awareness has manifested itself in many ways, not least in the foundation of the Limerick Family Planning Association and in the emergence of a left wing consensus in the local working class movement.

One of the clearest and most vigorous expressions of this consensus is to be found in the voting support for the paper's editor, Jim Kemmy since 1974. This support culminated in his election as senior alderman of the city in June last year with 1,512 votes.

This success shows that the people of Limerick will support an uncompromising socialist candidate who has the determination to stick to his or her cause. There is no other explanation for the breakthrough.

All these factors make for an encouraging opportunity for the advance of socialism in Limerick. Given the correct policies, a growing public awareness and socialist representatives who are prepared to work hard for the people, there is no reason why further political progress cannot be achieved.

This 100th edition is another milestone in the history of Limerick working class and political journalism. The issue also maintains the unrivalled position of the Limerick Socialist as the longest surviving paper of its kind in the history of such publications in the city.

encyclicals of the time.

Traditionally the Knights have been opposed to communists, Jews and Freemasons. It is unlikely today that any of them would openly admit to being anti-semitic. The masons are a spent force. Only the communists are left, and they're fairly thin on the ground. The Knights are not averse to a bit of McCarthyism when it suits them and they instigated the campaign in the Catholic Standard in the 'fifties against members and supporters of the Communist Party in Dublin. There were photographs of members and sympathisers, and employers were invited to fire those named in the paper. All this was in the name of religion and democracy.

The most forceful attack on the Knights by a politician came from Senator Noel Hartnett in 1954. Hartnett was a long and close associate of Dr. Noel Browne and one-time director of elections for Clann na Poblachta. He said that unless the Knights were curbed it meant an end "to fair play, to promotion on merit and, after long suffering, a denouement such as had occurred in a square in Milan when Mussolini was publicly hanged". Strong words about a group that a bishop described as 'the cream of Catholic Ireland'.

According to Miss Bolster most of the secret signs, the strange rituals and the unusual garb have been abandoned. Supreme Knight Vincent Grogan is credited with initiating change here; it was he also who tried to persuade them to abandon the secrecy and "to rid the organisation of the taint of conspiracy by bringing it into the open". This attempt to bring the Knights out of the shadows into the light was resisted by the conservatives who could cite a solid tradition to support their case. Grogan continued his way appearing on T.V. shows, criticising the bishops for their autocracy and co-operating with a "Seven Days" television team who made a documentary on the society. The general membership damned him with faint praise and were hardly

sorry to see his back when he later abandoned them and his family for the love of a young barmaid. Grogan was a rare Knight; he was colourful and had a bit of style.

The organisation is strong in Dublin and in Northern Ireland where Catholic businessmen have traditionally felt threatened. Its strength in the south varies from town to town. Limerick, surprisingly enough, is not a stronghold. Bolster gives the Limerick C.K. as 19 as opposed to Ennis with 26 and Tralee with 30.

In the provincial towns it is a Catholic businessman's club and members are recruited from the St. Vincent de Paul Society and through personal acquaintanceship. In these country towns everyone knows everyone else. In an Irish town it is easy to know who the Knights are. For instance, the Chief Knight in Ennis is Ted Shiels, holder of the Ford franchise for County Clare. Shiels gives a free car to the Bishop of Killaloe every year. The business was built up by his father, known as the "Bishop" Shiels for his unctuousness and religiosity. A few years ago Shiels's daughter married Patrick McElligott of McElligott's garages. This family hold the Fiat franchise for County Kerry and the late Paddy McElligott was a prominent Kerry Knight. There were three bishops at the wedding, which one wit described as "more of a merger than a wedding".

For those who view the Church as primarily a political institution of great importance in the country a study of the Knights is important. Evelyn Bolster has done valuable work. She has uncovered the tip of the iceberg.

There is, of course, far more to the Knights of Columbanus than appears in her book and there's work for a serious student in the field ferreting, winking and delving into this powerful secret society. Until a more in-depth book is written Evelyn Bolster's "The Knights of St. Columbanus" is a worthwhile reference book to have on the shelf.



# A Socialist Notebook

## LOCAL HISTORY

All those interested in local history will have welcomed the appearance of *The Old Limerick Journal*. The history of a country can be legitimately studied through local history. All the major movements in Irish history are reflected in happenings in Limerick. Indeed, the city could well be considered the ideal place for the study of Irish history, for it is big enough to reflect national events, while still retaining its own distinctive local characteristics.

A study of Limerick at the turn of the century reveals the rising power of Catholic nationalism and the decline of the old order. The driving power behind the setting up of the new state is very much in evidence.

It is an original way to tackle the history of the country, mining the local quarry. The professional historians tend like other professionals to draw a ring around their subject and cultivate a mystique that warns off the amateur. But local history is being studied by more and more people.

The *Old Limerick Journal* presents a people's history, much of it hidden or previously unwritten. There are those who say that the history of Ireland is yet to be written. Certainly the schools' history with its simplistic heroes and villains is far removed from the real thing. The social history of Ireland is still unwritten and there is no real socialist history. There are some that purport to be but they are seriously flawed and frequently biased.

The *Old Limerick Journal* will have its critics. There are those with vested interests in seeing that the truth remains untold. There are those who write of 'muck raking' and opening up 'old wounds'. What they are saying basically is that the truth should be hidden, that the rug should be pulled over what they wish to hide, that the skeletons should be kept locked in the cupboard. They are on the side of ignorance and darkness. They believe it is better that people should not know the facts of history. This might have been accepted in the past but it will not hold today. But old attitudes die hard. Those who send anonymous letters to the papers with fictitious addresses show that they have neither the learning nor the courage to argue their case openly. They are in a minority — and they are fighting a losing battle.

## AN ELECTION?

Recently I saw some Labour Party youth posters on hoardings in Dublin. The only time the Labour Party stirs itself is when there's an election pending.

It seems at long last that the left may make a breakthrough of some sort in the next general election. Dr. Noel Browne will in all probability be returned should he stand again. Jim Kemmy will make a determined and hopefully successful bid for a seat. Joe Sherlock of the Sinn Fein Workers Party looks like taking a seat in North Cork and another S.F.W.P. candidate, Paddy Gallagher in Waterford, could also be elected.

The left, fragmented and all as it is, has been working steadily over the past ten years or so, publishing papers, turning out theoretical journals and policy documents, bringing a socialist view to history, writing plays and poetry, holding seminars, reading papers and so on. Gone are the days when a candidate could jump on a platform, announce he was a socialist and ask people to vote for him. It happened in '69 when a mixum-gatherum of dilettantes and liberals jumped on the Labour Party bandwagon.

by  
**William Gallagher**

The candidates of the capitalist parties are still elected on slogans and gimmicks (teeshirts, Charlie's perfume, "Get Ireland Moving Again", "Back Jack") but it is much different on the left. Slogans will garner no votes amongst serious left wingers nor rouse them to go out and canvass. Nor are they very sold on personalities. Many of them went round the course in '69 and they know that the personality candidates have little to offer.

It is even possible that after the next general election two or three left wing T.D.s could find themselves in a balance of power situation and that Limerick city could have its first socialist deputy. Hasten the day!

## SCRAP ARTICLES—2 & 3 DROP THE CLAIM ON NORTHERN IRELAND

### SOCIALISTS AGAINST NATIONALISM

**We believe:** That the clear wish of the majority of people in Northern Ireland to remain citizens of the United Kingdom must be respected.

**We declare:** That socialists must accept the present state boundaries in Ireland as a basis for developing socialist politics. The call for a 32-county socialist Republic is nothing more than the old nationalism newly dressed in a socialist guise.

**We oppose:** The demand for the British Government to declare its intention to withdraw from Northern Ireland.

**We demand:** That the Government of the Republic should recognise as legitimate the present constitutional status of Northern Ireland. To this end we demand that Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution, which lays claim to Northern Ireland's territory, be dropped. This is clearly required by the Helsinki Agreement, which was signed by the Republic in 1975.

**Membership:** Membership is open to all those who support our aims.

Contact: 33 Greenhill Road, Garryowen, Limerick.

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